Mount Robson Provincial Park

MASTER PLAN

DRAFT

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BC Parks

Ministry of Lands and Parks

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Minister

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1. PLAN HIGHLIGHTS

- Mount Robson Provincial Park is one of the best known parks in British Columbia As part of the Canadian Rocky Mountains World Heritage Site, it has a strong conservation role and also offers outstanding backcountry recreation opportunities. As well, it also serves as a travel route and a holiday destination.

- Wilderness character of Mount Robson Park will be preserved; 82% or 180,000 hectares of the park has been zoned for wilderness conservation and wilderness recreation which controls mechanized access and facility development.

- Natural processes will predominate, but park visitors, facilities and forests outside the park will be protected. To manage the natural ecosystem, a forest management plan will be prepared.

- Possible boundary extensions on the west side of the park will be investigated to protect conservation values, visual qualities, and recreation features such as the caves in the Small River area.

- The Berg Lake Trail is a world renowned backcountry destination that is under pressure from the large number of users; a management plan for the area will be developed to protect the experience and the environment.

- The park contains vital wildlife habitats and supports a variety of wildlife populations. To manage these, a wildlife management plan will be developed. A Travel Corridor wildlife management plan will be prepared specifically to address wildlife concerns on the Travel Corridor. Initiatives will be undertaken to manage wildlife in conjunction with Jasper National Park and Ministry of Environment.

- Helicopters will be allowed through park use permits to land only at specially designated sites in the Wilderness Recreation Zones and in the Robson Pass area of the Berg Lake Natural Environment Zone. Flight corridors and the days and hours of flights will be limited in the Robson Pass area.

- A Travel Corridor vegetation plan will be prepared. It will address steps to intervene on an otherwise evolving system in order to protect scenic values, facilities and wildlife.

2. INTRODUCTION

Mount Robson Provincial Park is one of British Columbia's best known and oldest parks. It is recognized for its conservation role in both protecting the unspoiled wilderness of the Rocky Mountains in British Columbia and preserving the special features such as Mt. Robson, the highest peak in the Canadian Rockies, and the headwaters of the Fraser River. Together with Jasper and Banff National Parks, Mount Robson Park encompasses internationally significant wilderness and wildlife habitat which has recently been designated as a World Heritage Site by the United Nations Environmental, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO).

Another contributing factor to the park's fame is the key transprovincial highway that passes through the park. The Yellowhead Highway connects Mount Robson with the Rocky Mountain national parks in Alberta and exposes tourists and highway travellers to spectacular mountain scenery. In addition, the highway provides access to the park's outstanding recreation features and experiences.

Mount Robson Park offers unique and distinct experiences, such as driving the Travel Corridor, hiking the Berg Lake Trail, climbing Mt. Robson, experiencing the Rocky Mountain wilderness, and camping in the shadow of Robson. These activities are heavily dependent on the natural resources of the park; appropriate management of the resources and recreational use is essential to maintain these high quality experiences and protect the resources.

Rearguard Falls and Mount Terry Fox Provincial Park are close to Mount Robson Park. These two areas contribute to the attractions and protected status of the area.

2.1 Purpose of the Plan

This master plan for Mount Robson Park defines the role of the park and establishes the objectives and desired actions to guide the management and development in the future. It also provides direction for a number of key park issues, including helicopter access, wildlife management, horse management and outdoor recreation.

The Mount Robson Background Report provides information to understand the rationale behind the master plan. Those who are unfamiliar with the park or who are reviewing this Master Plan for the first time may find it useful to read the Background Report, available from the Northern B.C. Regional Office in Prince George.

A team of staff from Northern B.C. Region, the Prince George District and Victoria Headquarters produced this report with input from the general public and interest groups.

2.2 Planning Issues

a) Role of the Park - Mount Robson Provincial Park serves both conservation and recreation roles established in the legislative mandate of BC Parks (Appendix 1). Through protecting a section of the Rocky Mountains, the park conserves the representative landscape of the Northern Continental Ranges and its associated wildlife. The park also provides recreation opportunities for the travelling public, the holiday destination seeker and the wilderness adventurer. As land outside the park is modified, the protected wilderness in the park becomes more valuable for recreation and conservation. This Master Plan sets direction for managing this dual role with emphasis on the management of wilderness.

b) Park Boundary - Generally the boundary of the park encompasses whole valleys, providing the best protection of the land base. However, the straight line boundary on the west side of the park cuts across natural features and excludes areas of recreation and conservation interest. The Master Plan gives direction to address this straight line boundary and protect features of recreation and conservation value.

c) Management of Park Resources - Mount Robson was established to conserve vegetation, wildlife, fish and heritage resources and special features. The Master Plan sets management guidelines to sustain viable wildlife populations. In addition, it gives direction for management of forests, fish, and heritage and special features.

d) Management and Development of Recreational Opportunities - The park offers a variety of outdoor recreation opportunities ranging from sightseeing and short hikes to multi-day excursions. The Master Plan establishes the compatible recreation opportunities for the park, suitable locations and acceptable levels of use, particularly for mountain biking, horse riding, hiking, camping and winter recreation. It also addresses the role of helicopters in the park and provide direction for management of this means of access. Lastly, it outlines appropriate type and scale of commercial recreation services acceptable in the park.

2.3 Background Summary

Mount Robson Provincial Park, set aside in 1913, is the second oldest and fifth largest Class A park in British Columbia. Its boundaries encompass 219,534 hectares of rugged mountains, glaciers, alpine meadows, waterfalls and valleys. The park has a long history of recreation use and is one of the best known parks in the province.

The park lies in the central Rocky Mountains on the Alberta-British Columbia border, next to Jasper National Park, 300 kilometres east of Prince George and 450 kilometres west of Edmonton (Figure 1). Together, Mount Robson and other parks in Alberta and British Columbia encompass a large natural area which protects almost a complete cross section of the Rocky Mountains. Mount Robson itself provides full representation of the Northern Continental Ranges Landscape in British Columbia and contains a complex mountain ecosystem represented by four biogeoclimatic zones.

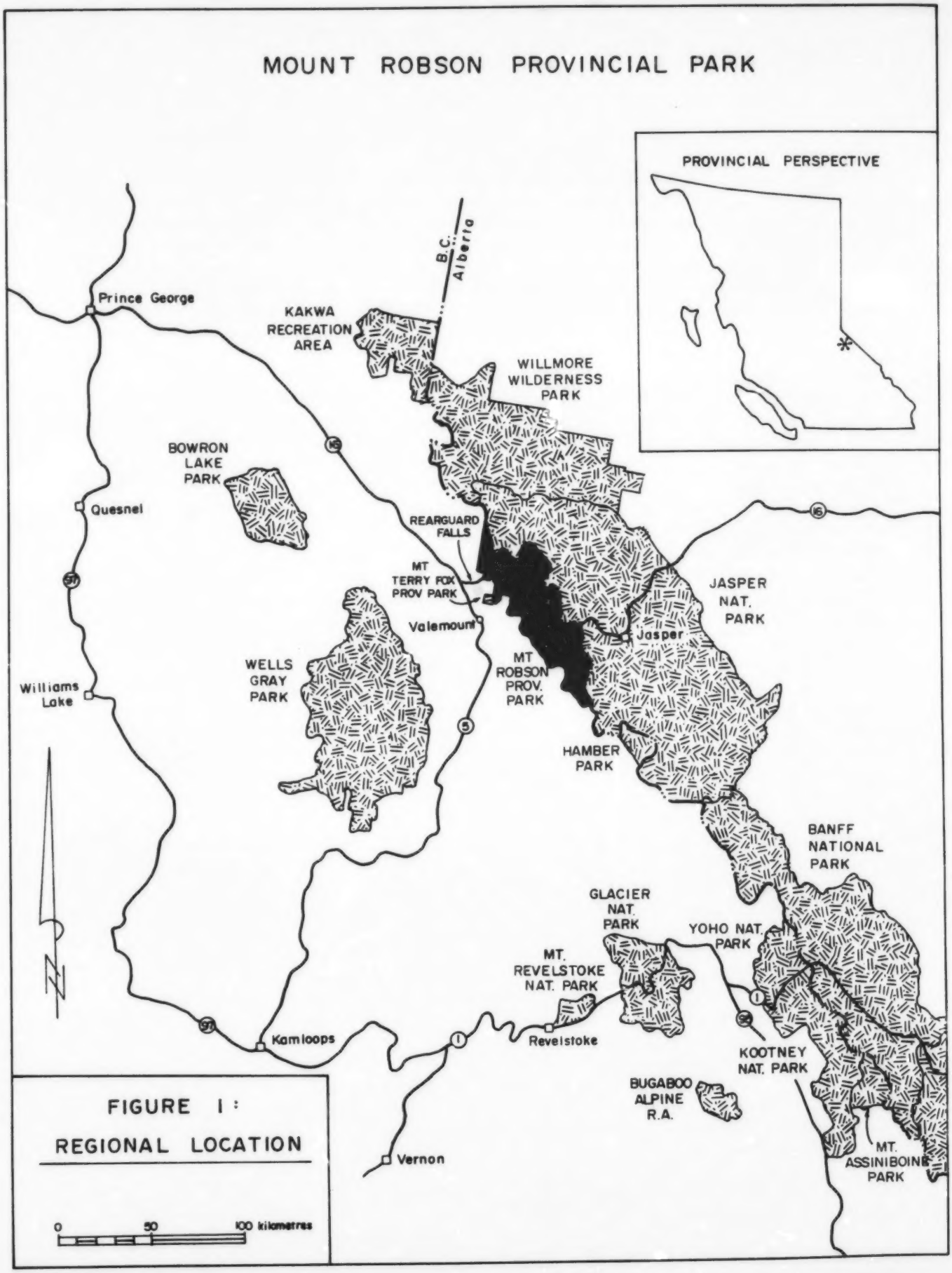
Mount Robson Park has a rich history, connected with the fur trade, exploration and the transcontinental railway. Early ascents of Robson and settlement along the railway have also contributed to this historic wealth. Today, a nationally important transportation route which includes Highway 16 and the Canadian National Railway passes through the park.

As a result of the large and varied mountain landscapes, diverse recreation opportunities are available in the park. The highway corridor receives the most use and provides the travelling public with superb mountain scenery, day-use activities, natural and cultural resource appreciation, and overnight accommodation. The park also provides outstanding backcountry recreation opportunities, such as hiking the Berg Lake Trail or climbing Mt. Robson.

Approximately 800,000 vehicles travel through the park each year; about 35% of these stop at the Visitor Centre. Over a year, an average of 38,000 campers use the campgrounds and 400,000 people enjoy the park for the day. Alberta residents are the most prevalent visitors to the park, comprising 35% of those who engage in backcountry, camping and hiking and 50% of the total users. Visitors from the United States and British Columbia make up about 25% of the backcountry visitors. British Columbia residents comprise 35% of the total campground users, while Americans account for 10%. Other Canadians and foreigners make up less than 10% of total park use.

Mount Terry Fox Provincial Park is contiguous with the southwest boundary of Mount Robson Park (Figure 1). It is a natural monument to the memory of the one-legged runner who captured the hearts of people around the world with his attempt to run across Canada, raising funds for cancer research. The park contains part of the western slopes of the Rockies and is important winter range for goats.

Rearguard Falls is a map reserve, that will soon receive Class A park designation (Figure 1). It was established to protect a regionally significant waterfall and is the last navigable barrier to the chinook salmon of the Fraser River.


MOUNT ROBSON PROVINCIAL PARK
PROVINCIAL PERSPECTIVE
B.C.
Alberta
Prince George
KAKWA RECREATION AREA
WILLMORE WILDERNESS PARK
BOWRON LAKE PARK
Quesnel
REARGUARD FALLS
MT TERRY FOX PROV PARK
Valemount
JASPER NAT. PARK
Jasper
WELLS GRAY PARK
MT ROBSON PROV. PARK
Williams Lake
HAMBER PARK
BANFF NATIONAL PARK
GLACIER NAT. PARK
YOHO NAT. PARK
MT. REVELSTOKE NAT. PARK
Kamloops
Revelstoke
KOOTNEY NAT. PARK
BUGABOO ALPINE R.A.
Vernon
MT. ASSINIBOINE PARK
FIGURE 1 :
REGIONAL LOCATION
0
50
100 kilometres

3. THE ROLE OF THE PARK

3.1 Regional and Provincial Significance

Mount Robson Park has long been acknowledged as an important conservation and outdoor recreation area. Its conservation and recreation role is further enhanced by being part of a larger protected area that includes Jasper and Banff National Parks. Together with the other Rocky Mountain parks, both national and provincial, Mount Robson is able to sustain the ecological diversity of the central and southern ranges of the Canadian Rocky Mountains. In recognition of this and of its outstanding undisturbed features, the park has joined the national parks as the Canadian Rocky Mountains World Heritage Site.

In addition to protecting a representative landscape and regional ecological diversity, Mount Robson also contains special natural features, such as the Mt. Robson massif known as the "Monarch of the Rockies", the headwaters of the Fraser River and the Ramparts. These remarkable features and the available outdoor recreation opportunities are highly prized by the people regionally, provincially, nationally and internationally. As a result of the transprovincial highway running through the park, Mount Robson Park also provides a strategically located entrance point to the province to welcome and inform visitors.

In achieving a provincial park system that reflects the needs and capabilities of the people it serves, BC Parks has developed a series of conservation and recreation goals, shown in Appendix A. Mount Robson Park plays a significant role in meeting these goals, as described below.

3.2 Conservation Role

- Over 180,000 hectares of wilderness, or 82% of the park, is protected for present and future generations. In these areas, natural processes are allowed to continue without human interference or impact from regular recreation use.
- The regional landscape of the Northern Continental Ranges is represented satisfactorily.
- Four of the province's 14 biogeoclimatic zones are found here.
- Special features such as Mt. Robson, the Ramparts, the headwaters of the Fraser River, and alpine meadows of Resplendent Valley and Miette Pass are preserved.
- Cultural features which include prehistoric sites, travel routes of early explorers and tourists, and railway townsites are protected.

3.3 Recreation Role

- Outstanding backcountry adventures in the Canadian Rocky Mountains are protected. Relatively easy access is offered from the highway. Such opportunities attract regional, national and international visitors.

- People travelling on the Yellowhead Highway are treated to superb mountain scenery, roadside rest and picnic stops, educational displays, short hiking trails and camping opportunities. Mount Robson Park contributes to local tourism through these attractions.

- An outdoor recreation holiday destination is available in Mount Robson Park. As part of the larger destination area of the Rocky Mountains and with opportunities for camping, wildlife viewing, short hikes, nature study, swimming, boating and fishing, the park makes an ideal family destination.

- Local recreation opportunities such as hiking, wildlife viewing, camping, fishing, picnicking, nature study are available in the park and attract local visitors from the Valemount, McBride and Jasper areas.

4. PARK ZONING

In planning and managing parks, BC Parks relies on zoning, which divides a park into logical units to apply uniform and consistent management objectives. Through identification of natural and recreational values, and analysis of existing and projected patterns of access and recreation use, the zoning defines levels and criteria for resource and visitor services management. See Appendix B for a indepth description of zoning.

As indicated in Figure 2, Mount Robson Park is separated into four zones which include Wilderness Conservation, Wilderness Recreation, Natural Environment, and Intensive Recreation. Given Mount Robson's conservation role, the areal extent of the wilderness designations, particularly the Wilderness Conservation Zone, is maximized to protect the wildlife and wilderness values of the area. This plan complements zoning of Jasper National Park.

The Special Feature Zone is not used in Mount Robson Park. The special features of the park are located in the highly protected designations of Wilderness Conservation or Wilderness Recreation and do not require the special management guidelines bought about by the Special Feature Zone.

4.1 Wilderness Conservation Zone

The objective of this zone is to protect a remote, undisturbed natural landscape and to provide unassisted backcountry recreation opportunities dependent on a pristine environment where no motorized activities are allowed. Development is nonexistent and management strategies are directed towards conservation of the resource while allowing wilderness recreation use. In short, areas designated as Wilderness Conservation are large natural areas free of any evidence of modern human beings with very low use and no facilities.

In Mount Robson Park, this zone covers portions of the park north and south of the Highway Corridor including Whitehorn Mountain, Resplendent Valley, Upright Creek, Mt. McNaughton, and the Fraser River. Some of these areas require special protection due to their sensitive nature; others have been designated Wilderness Conservation because of their undisturbed state. This zone encompasses over 130,000 hectares or 60% of the park.

4.2 Wilderness Recreation Zone

The objective of this zone is to protect a remote, undisturbed natural landscape and to provide backcountry recreation opportunities dependent on a pristine environment where air access may be permitted to designated sites. Facility development is minimal, at a level sufficient to satisfy user needs and concentrate use to protect the overall environment of the park. Approved facilities include trails, trail signs, designated camping areas, sanitary facilities and corrals. In summary, areas designated Wilderness Recreation are large natural areas where natural ecological processes occur largely uninfluenced by human activity, and where low levels of recreation use are permitted but confined to specific primitive facilities and sites.

This zone covers portions of the park north and south of the Highway Corridor including the following: Mount Longstaff; Mt. Robson; the Moose River Route including Colonel Creek, Miette Pass, Grant Brook areas; Alpland and Emerald Ridges; and the Mount Fitzwilliam area. This encompasses over 48,000 hectares or 22% of the park.

4.3 Natural Environment Zone

The objective of this zone is to protect scenic values, to provide a buffer between Intensive Recreation and Wilderness Conservation Zones, and to provide for backcountry recreational opportunities in a largely undisturbed natural state. The main management concern is encouraging backcountry use while keeping impacts below levels that will impair park resources or significantly reduce user satisfaction.

In Mount Robson Park, this zone encompasses three areas: the lower portion of the Swiftcurrent Creek which has road access; the Berg Lake Trail where the bulk of the backcountry use occurs; and the Scenic Corridor which is the transition area from the heavily used travel corridor to more remote wilderness areas. The higher levels of use in the Berg Lake Trail and the noise and sight of the Travel Corridor may at times preclude a sense of wilderness isolation. Facilities in this area are moderately developed with trails, walk-in campsites and shelters. This zone covers approximately 33,000 hectares or 15% of the park.

4.4 Intensive Recreation Zone

The objective of this zone is to provide for a variety of readily accessible facility-oriented outdoor recreation opportunities. This includes areas of high facility development such as campgrounds, picnic and play areas, administrative buildings, and parking lots. The management intent of this designation is to accommodate high levels of vehicle-based users in as natural a setting as possible.

In Mount Robson Park, this zone encompasses the Travel Corridor which is most heavily visited and developed part of the park. Located in this zone are visitor services and facilities for readily accessible day-use recreation opportunities, overnight camping, and parking at trail heads. Approximately 6,600 hectares or 3% of the park is designated for intensive recreation.

MOUNT ROBSON PROVINCIAL PARK

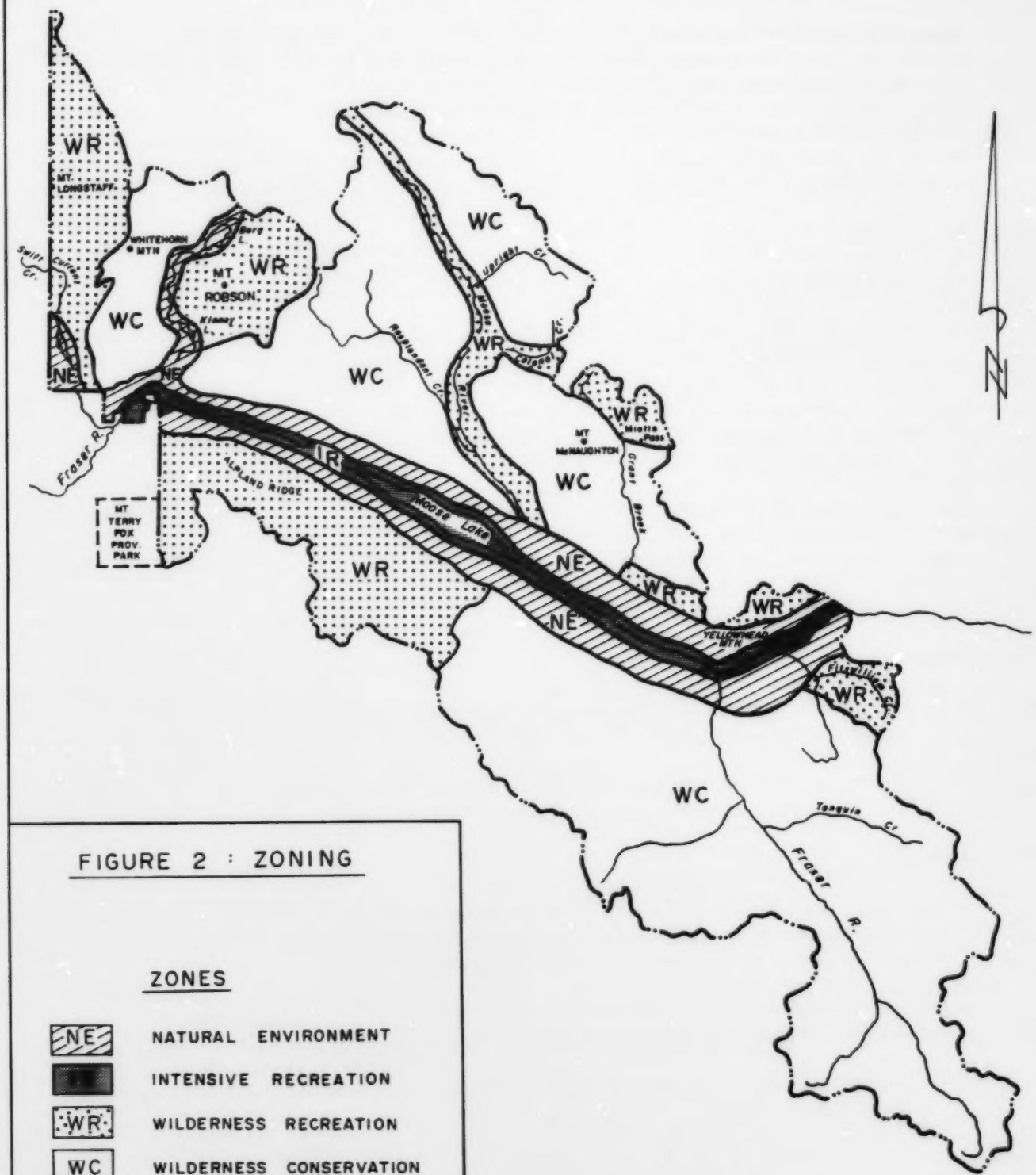


FIGURE 2 : ZONING

ZONES

- NE — NATURAL ENVIRONMENT
- IR — INTENSIVE RECREATION
- WR — WILDERNESS RECREATION
- WC — WILDERNESS CONSERVATION

0 5 10 15
Kilometres

5. NATURAL AND CULTURAL RESOURCES MANAGEMENT

Mount Robson Park has long been recognized in the province for its important conservation role. Its location next to the other protected areas in the Rocky Mountains contributes to its significance as a natural area able to sustain ecological diversity. The high profile of Mount Robson, the increasing demand for backcountry recreation and the significance of park resources dictates that the park must be protected and managed wisely. To this end, the following section sets resource management objectives and describes actions to be undertaken to protect natural features and processes.

5.1 Land

5.1.1 Boundary

Most of the park boundary follows natural features such as the mountain ridges forming the Continental Divide. This gives the best protection to natural resources by preserving whole valleys and controlling activities in those valleys. However, part of the western boundary consists of straight lines, established in 1913, which cut across natural features and exclude, for example, the major viewpoints of Mount Robson. The boundaries of Mount Terry Fox Park are also straight lines which are difficult to administer.

The Swiftcurrent Creek drainage is an area of concern. Timber harvesting is planned for the north slopes of Mount Chamberlain. Road access is needed and the most logical route would follow the old road route through a corner of the park. The recreation, wildlife and aesthetic values of this area dictate that BC Parks work closely with the Ministry of Forests and industry in the development of this area.

Objective:

To protect areas adjacent to park that have wildlife, recreation and aesthetic value through cooperative management with other agencies.

To protect the existing land area of the park while investigating expansion of park boundaries into adjacent areas that have high park values.

Actions:

- Work with the Ministry of Forests, Ministry of Environment, Lands Branch and the Regional District to protect wildlife, recreation and aesthetic values along park boundaries and control access into wilderness areas.

- Initiate detailed studies and discussion with various agencies, organizations and individuals to review the following areas as possible additions to the park (Figure 3):

  - Small River area - on the northwest boundary where there are significant cave formations;

MOUNT ROBSON PROVINCIAL PARK

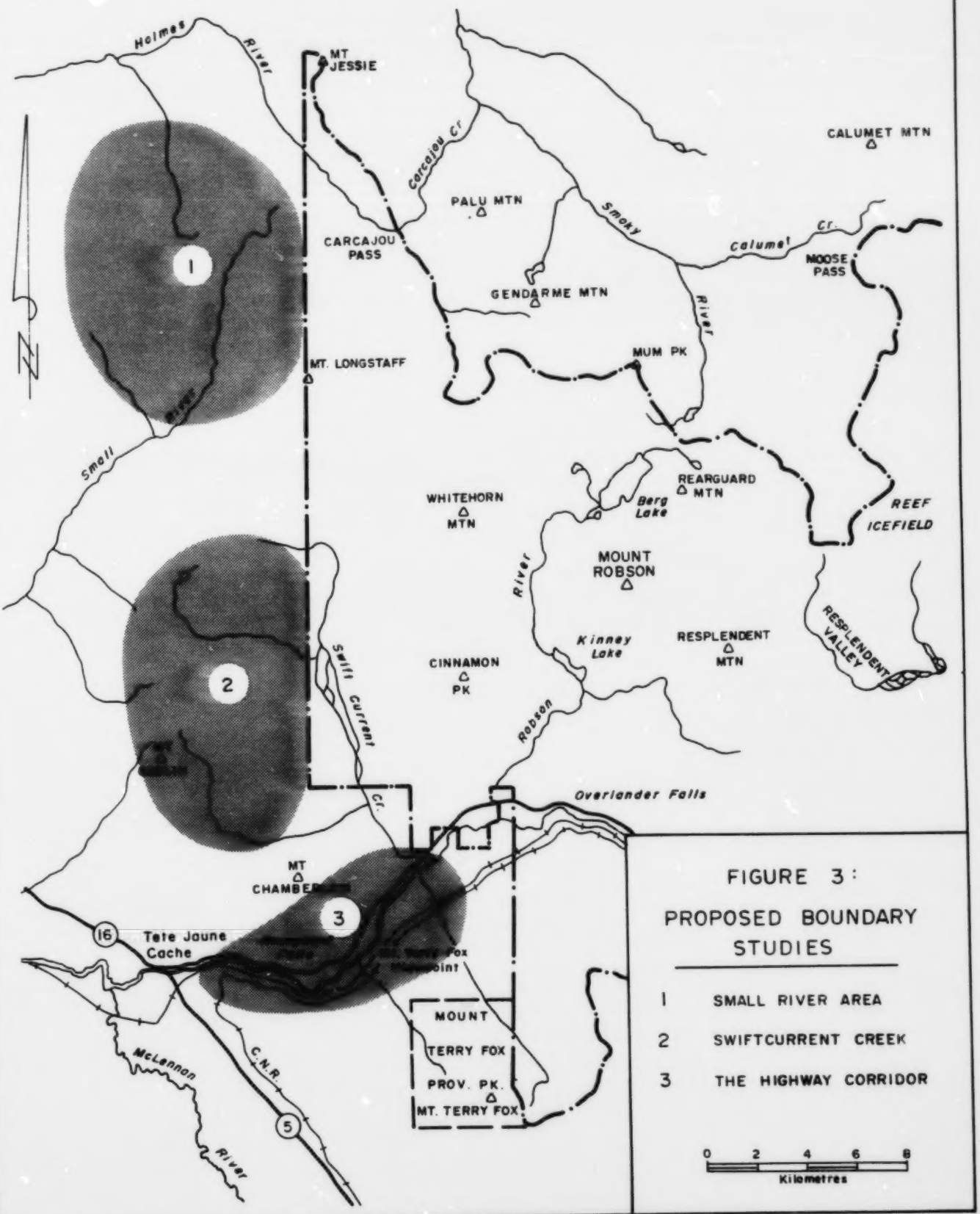


FIGURE 3:

PROPOSED BOUNDARY STUDIES

1 SMALL RIVER AREA

2 SWIFTCURRENT CREEK

3 THE HIGHWAY CORRIDOR

0 2 4 6 8

Kilometres

- Swiftcurrent Creek - on the northwest boundary to protect recreation opportunities, wildlife habitat and visual aesthetics.

- The Highway Corridor - on the west boundary to protect the aesthetics along the Travel Corridor from the west boundary to Tete Jaune, to protect a complete cross section of the Rocky Mountains and to include Rearguard Falls as part of Mount Robson Park.

- Obtain park designation for Rearguard Falls.

- Investigate opportunities to change the boundaries of the Mount Terry Fox Provincial Park to follow natural features.

5.1.2 Inholdings and Other Tenures

Mount Robson Park has been an important transportation corridor for a long time, resulting in many varying land rights throughout the park. Eight parcels of land are owned by TransMountain Pipeline Company and CN Railway. Fifteen separate rights of way agreement are in place for Highway 16, CN Railway, Trans Mountain Pipeline, BC Tel and BC Hydro. Three interests, which include CN Railway, Trans Mountain Pipeline and Mount Robson Provincial Park, have water rights. Thirty park use permits allow uses such as gravel extraction and occupation of cabins (see Background Report for details).

Objectives:

To manage non-conforming inholdings and tenures to meet the conservation role of the park.

To reduce, where possible, the number of non-conforming uses.

To minimize environment and visual impacts of non-conforming uses.

Actions:

- Eliminate the trapline park use permit as it is not consistent with the conservation and recreation goals of the park.

- Phase out private cabins and rehabilitate sites to natural state.

- Continue to work with utility and transportation agencies to minimize visual and environmental impacts.

- Investigate opportunities to consolidate non-conforming facilities, present and future, such as repeater stations and access roads.

- Permit other non-conforming facilities in Intensive Recreation Zone only, and only for the benefit of the people of British Columbia.

- Continue to require permit holders to remove unnatural objects, such as buildings, and rehabilitate to natural state, once permit has been terminated or cancelled.
- Maintain pipeline, BC Hydro, and BC Tel rights of way as parkland for recreation opportunities that may be provided as a result of these corridors, such as bike paths and cross-country ski routes.

5.2 Water

Mount Robson Park protects the headwaters of the Fraser River and its tributaries. The preservation of this river and other high quality water resources is an important component of the conservation and recreation role of the park. Permits for water rights are held by CN Railway, Trans Mountain Pipeline and Mount Robson Provincial Park.

Objective:

To protect the headwaters of the Fraser River and maintain the pure, unpolluted quality of waters within the park for aesthetic, ecological and health considerations.

Actions:

- Prohibit water impoundments, diversions and future domestic use projects within the park, except to protect transportation links from flooding or erosion.

- Ensure that sanitary facilities are properly designed and located.

- Develop contingency plans with the Provincial Emergency Program, CN Railway, Trans Mountain Pipeline and Ministry of Transportation and Highways to address accidental spills along the Travel Corridor.

5.3 Vegetation

Vegetation is the basis for wildlife habitats and contributes to the visual and recreational attractions of the park. Mount Robson Park protects four of the province's fourteen biogeoclimatic zones and encompasses some special vegetation features such as the oldest known Whitebark pine in Canada. The natural processes of fire, disease and insect infestations are fundamental in maintaining the complex forest ecosystem but require management to protect important recreation values, facilities and commercial forests on adjacent lands.

Objective:

To maintain plant communities and species that create or contribute to the visual and recreation attractions of Mount Robson Park.

To maintain, where compatible with other park objectives, the established pattern of varied aged forest stand, reflecting the natural processes that occur in unmanaged forests.
To maintain the diversity of wildlife vegetation habitats in the park.

To preserve special sensitive and rare native plant communities and species.

To encourage non-destructive scientific studies to improve the knowledge of the park.

To discourage the establishment of non-native species.

Actions:

- Develop a long term forest management strategy for the park. Key elements in this strategy include:

  - forest resource inventory including forest types, the occurrence of rare plant species and sensitive plant communities;
  - wildlife habitat inventory including critical wintering range;
  - fire suppression and management;
  - disease and insect infestations;
  - vegetation management along the Travel Corridor;
  - land uses in adjacent areas.

- Prepare a fire management plan to protect the park infrastructure and commercial forests outside the park and to mimic natural processes which will maintain plant and animal diversity. Also included will be public evacuation measures, priority control areas and fire control methods. Until the fire management plan is prepared, all wildfire is subject to initial attack either by the Forest Service or BC Parks. Once the situation is assessed, the fire may be allowed to run its natural course within the Wilderness Recreation and Wilderness Conservation Zones as long as park facilities, visitors and adjacent commercial forests are not in danger.

- Develop a pest infestation control program directed at preventing the westward spread of infestations and degradation of the highly valued corridor scenery. Items to be included are methods of control, management of fire hazards and blowdown, threats to wildlife habitat and rare plant communities, and the role in maintaining ecological diversity. Until such a plan is prepared and dictates otherwise, a selective tree removal program will be undertaken along the western boundaries or in Natural Environment and Intensive Recreation Zones only. The purpose would be to prevent the westward spread of insects to commercial forests and protect views from the Travel Corridor.

- Develop a Travel Corridor vegetation management plan to maintain scenic qualities, protect facilities and reduce wildlife mortalities on highway and railway. In the Intensive Recreation and Natural Environment Zones along the corridor, steps may be taken to intervene in the otherwise evolving ecosystem of the park.

- Protect sensitive or unique vegetation communities from adverse impacts of recreational uses including the grazing of horses.
- Maintain close contact with the Ministry of Forests and industry in the review of the forest development plans in the various drainages leading to the park boundary to protect aesthetics, recreation and wilderness values.

- Retain trees and snags for wildlife habitat except those that present a hazard to people or facilities.

5.4 Wildlife

Mount Robson Provincial Park is home to a large variety of wildlife species, from mountain goats, moose and grizzly bears to chipmunks and marmots. The park is part of a larger protected area which allows the movement of wide-ranging species and migration between gene pools. Sufficient numbers of a genetically diverse population must be maintained to sustain viable populations over the long term. In addition, steps must be taken to preserve critical habitats and reduce mortalities as a result of highway traffic, trains and poachers on the Travel Corridor.

Wildlife viewing is a popular recreational opportunity and often strengthens the bond visitors have with the park. However, it is imperative that the animals are not disturbed, particularly in times of physiological stress such as during winter or birth.

Objectives:

To maintain and protect the natural diversity of wildlife species and populations.

To protect critical habitats and enhance declining habitats where it is compatible with other park resource management and recreation use objectives.

To provide public viewing and non-consumptive appreciation of wildlife.

To encourage scientific research in the park, particularly those with direct management benefits.

Actions:

- Develop a long term management plan for wildlife in the park. Key elements in this strategy include:
    - ongoing wildlife inventory;
    - inventory of habitat requirements of populations with particular reference to critical habitats;
    - role of fire, insect and disease in terms of creating a range of habitats including snags for various bird and animal species;
    - transboundary management;
    - opportunities for research programs;
    - control of nuisance animals, such as beaver to prevent flooding in the Travel Corridor.

- Develop Travel Corridor wildlife management plan based on critical feeding habitats, winter range and migration routes. Use public information to create awareness for hazards faced by wildlife along the Travel Corridor.

- Continue to implement recommendations from the bear hazard assessment to reduce conflicts between bears and park visitors.

- Prepare an environmental assessment of any future recreational development in the Intensive Recreation, Natural Environment and Wilderness Recreation Zones.

- Consider wildlife habitat enhancement measures only in the Natural Environment and Intensive Recreation Zones.

- Keep park closed to hunting.

- Acquire the existing trapline territory in the east end of the park as it is inconsistent with conservation and recreation goals.

- Cooperate and establish common objectives with Jasper National Park and Ministry of Environment to manage trans-boundary populations and identify habitat requirements.

- Develop wildlife viewing opportunities at Moose Marsh.

- Protect wildlife habitats by minimizing the impacts of park development and recreation use.

- Investigate opportunities to work with Canadian Park Service, Alberta Parks and other B.C. parks to manage for carnivore populations (including grizzly bears) in response to World Wildlife Fund call for Carnivore Conservation Areas.

- Protect the park's limited wetlands to maintain the natural environment and the diverse bird populations.

5.5 Fish

The Fraser River supports an internationally important salmon run, the easterly extent being Overlander Falls. In the rest of the park, however, fish populations and variety of species are low due to the cold, silty lakes and streams. Moose, Yellowhead and Lucerne Lakes and a number of smaller lakes, creeks and streams have native populations, while Witney and Portal Lakes are regularly stocked with rainbow trout. Some lakes lack fish altogether. Recreational angling opportunities in the park are limited.

Objective:

To conserve viable natural fish populations while providing opportunities for viewing and limited recreational fishing.

Actions:

- Encourage fishing in Intensive Recreation Zone only.
- Direct angling to Portal and Witney Lakes and continue enhancement measures and restrictions as required. Monitor fishing effort through creel census and success of management activities.
- Assess potential fishery enhancement through natural production in Moose and Yellowhead Lakes, by addressing suitability and environmental and social impacts.
- Maintain all alpine lakes in natural state.
- Enhance fish viewing opportunities at Rearguard Falls through educational signage.

5.6 Cultural Resources

Mount Robson Park has three main sources of cultural themes:

1) the prehistoric record;
2) the historic significance of the Yellowhead Pass; and
3) the early ascents of Mount Robson.

The archaeological record indicates that early inhabitants may have established hunting camps in the Fraser Valley. The Yellowhead Pass has played a major role as a travel route for Indians, fur traders, explorers, the early tourists, the railways and the Yellowhead Highway. Early attempts to climb the highest peak in the Canadian Rockies have added to the colourful dimension to the history of Mount Robson Park.

Objectives:

To preserve the cultural resource values which relate to the rich history of the park.

To provide information and education on the park's heritage.

Actions:

- Assess cultural resources for educational and recreational potential, for scientific needs, and for protective status. Develop appropriate management strategies for identified heritage sites.
- Undertake a heritage impact assessment prior to any facility development along the Corridor.
- Maintain the cemetery at the Lucerne Townsite.
- Work with Jasper National Park to develop educational themes along Highway 16 across the Rockies.
- Develop heritage education programs using the Visitor Centre, sites and trails.
- Establish direct contact with the Shuswap native people to determine significance of the Mount Robson area in their culture.

5.7 Visual Resources

The scenery in and around Mount Robson Provincial Park is fundamental to the visitor's experience. It is a particularly strong component along the Highway Corridor and the Berg Lake Trail.

Objective:

To retain views in and out of park so that the visual qualities and wilderness atmosphere of the park are protected.

Actions:

- Recognize that the Intensive Recreation Zone encompassing the Travel Corridor is a modified landscape where the naturally evolving system is interfered with to protect facilities and wildlife, and maintain scenic qualities. Manage the Corridor in an environmentally sensitive manner, using every opportunity to benefit wildlife populations.
- Continue to provide and manage a variety of road-side interpretive viewpoints in the Intensive Recreation Zone, including the Terry Fox Viewpoint.

- Work with other agencies including the Ministry of Forests, the Ministry of Transportation and Highways, the Regional District, CN Railway, BC Tel, BC Hydro and Trans Mountain Pipeline to minimize visual impacts of activities such as logging, gravel pits, development of private land, particularly where scenic values are considered important.

- Locate and design all park facilities in harmony with the visual setting.

- Reactivate proposal to add the Travel Corridor west to Tete Jaune to the park.

- Work with Jasper National Park to create and coordinate a Rocky Mountain park highway experience.

5.8 Outdoor Recreation Features

Mount Robson Park protects outstanding recreation features such as the Berg Lake Trail and extraordinary special features such as Mt. Robson, the Ramparts and Miette Pass, which also support recreation. All of these features contribute to Mount Robson's recreation and conservation role, but vary in terms of sensitivity and ability to support visitors and, consequently, require different management prescriptions.

Mount Robson Park complements the wilderness recreation opportunities available in the larger adjacent complex of protected areas. It also ensures a quality experience which may not be available on the Crown lands outside the park, which are managed primarily for resource utilization.

Objective:

To manage recreational use of resources and special features for minimal impact so that activities are sustainable and the resources are protected.

Actions:

- Manage recreation use according to zoning - very low use of wilderness type in the Wilderness Conservation and Wilderness Recreation Zones; controlled use in the Natural Environment and Intensive Recreation Zones.

- Limit use of sensitive features such as alpine meadows.

- Assess carrying capacity of Berg Lake Trail and through a management plan, control recreation use accordingly.

- Locate and design all park facilities in harmony with the visual setting.

- Undertake environmental assessment for all future recreation development.

6. VISITOR SERVICES

6.1 General Concept

In providing services to the park visitor, BC Parks has four recreation system goals, as presented in Appendix A. Mount Robson Park meets all four of these goals and also offers distinctive world-class experiences readily associated with the park. These are discussed in the following sections.

6.1.1 Travel Route

Highway 16 enters British Columbia at Mount Robson Park from the internationally known national parks in Alberta, providing a prime travel link through the scenic Rocky Mountains.

The key experience associated with this goal is "Driving the Spectacular Rocky Mountains". This offers spectacular mountain scenery, waterfalls, beautiful lakes, abundant wildlife and Mount Robson itself, all of which makes an outstanding park experience. A range of visitors from local travellers to international tourists enjoy the drive along the Travel Corridor and stop at viewpoints, picnic sites, interpretive stops and campgrounds. This experience can take as little as a couple of hours or as much as a couple of days.

6.1.2 Outdoor Recreation Holiday Destination

Along the highway are three campgrounds which supply a base for the highway travellers, particularly the visitors from British Columbia and Alberta, to explore the park.

"Camping in the Shadow of Robson" is the key experience associated with this goal. The park is well-suited for the extended weekend or the family vacation. Three park campgrounds and numerous private campsites meet most camping needs. The diverse day-use activities, from interpretive programs at the Visitor Centre to day hikes, keep visitors busy through their stay.

6.1.3 Backcountry Recreation

Just off the highway, the park has spectacular backcountry areas. From the world renowned Berg Lake Trail to the remote Upper Fraser River, novice hikers and wilderness seekers can fulfil their backcountry expectations in the park.

Mount Robson Park offers three key experiences which fall under this goal. First, "Hiking the Berg Lake Trail" is an internationally popular backcountry experience for hikers. The spectacular vistas of waterfalls, forests, glaciers, mountains make this one of the outstanding hikes of the Rocky Mountains, attracting visitors regionally and internationally. Visitors generally take two to three days to enjoy this part of the park; however, some take a week to explore the backcountry around Berg Lake.

Secondly, "Climbing the Monarch of the Rockies" rates as a world-class climb. Mt. Robson is sought by experienced climbers internationally. Depending on the route and the weather, this gruelling climb takes between four days to a week.

Thirdly, "Experiencing the Rocky Mountain Wilderness" offers mountains and alpine meadows in the isolation of the Rocky Mountains. Wilderness seekers ranging from local residents to international travellers find undisturbed wilderness in the Moose River Valley, the Upper Fraser Valley and along Alpland and Emerald Ridges. These excursions into remote areas can extend pass ten days.

6.1.4 Local Recreation

Mount Robson Park offers a number of day-use activities in a world-class setting that attract people from the neighbouring communities of Valemount, McBride and Jasper. These activities include swimming, boating, hiking, nature appreciation, picnicking and fishing.

6.1.5 Continuity of Experience

In delivering these world-class experiences, BC Parks will manage for continuity of experience. From the time the visitors receive information on the park, a certain expectation is set. That expectation will be met from the time the visitors enter the park until the time they leave again. This includes the pre-trip information, onsite information, access, secure parking, appropriate trails for the activity, appropriate management of vegetation and wildlife along trails.

6.2 Access Strategy

The primary access to Mount Robson Park is Highway 16 which bisects the park from east to west, running through the Yellowhead Pass and along the Fraser River. Along this route are a number of viewpoints, interpretive stops, picnic sites and campgrounds.

This Travel Corridor also provides the main access to the backcountry. Numerous trails and routes leave the highway and lead into the interior of the park. Hikers can access to Mount Robson Park from Jasper National Park through Carcajou Creek and Smoky River Valley; both hikers and horse riders can gain access from Miette, Colonel and Tonquin Passes.

Future forestry roads in the Ptarmigan and Hugh Allen drainages in the south and existing roads in the Holmes River area in the north could have significant implications and impacts on the wilderness qualities of adjacent park areas. Controlling access from outside the park is essential to protect the integrity of the Wilderness Conservation and Wilderness Recreation Zones.

Access by helicopter is controlled through both zoning and permits. Helicopters cannot land in the Wilderness Conservation Zones. In the Wilderness Recreation Zones, helicopters can only land in specially designated areas described in a park use permit. In the Natural Environment Zones, helicopter require a park use permit; in the Berg Lake Natural Environment Zone, a permit restricts landings to the Robson Pass and details flight paths, time and days of flight.

Float planes are not be permitted on Yellowhead Lake but are allowed on the west end of Moose Lake by permit only. If private float planes landings increase in frequency, BC Parks will work with the B.C. Aviation Council in controlling private float plane use to protect wildlife, recreation and environmental values.

6.3 Information Strategy

Mount Robson Park represents a truly unique opportunity for BC Parks to educate and inform both the visitors to British Columbia and the people of British Columbia. It is a major park located on a transprovincial highway which offers an awesome view of the highest peak in the Canadian Rocky Mountains. In addition, the Visitor Centre is strategically located at this world-renowned viewpoint. Consequently, the park has the potential to play a key provincial role in welcoming visitors to the province, providing tourism information, and informing visitors about the BC Parks system, its conservation and recreation mandate.

Information can:

- create an awareness of the role of the park in achieving the goals of the provincial park system;
- promote an understanding of and appreciation for the natural and cultural resources of the park and the surrounding region;
- instill a sense of stewardship for the park and the park system;
- provide visitors with information that will enhance their use and enjoyment of the park's facilities and services;
- provide information on other provincial parks in British Columbia.

This information will be directed at highway travellers, backcountry hikers, day-users and holiday seekers. Highway travellers make up the bulk of visitors to the park, a large number of which are en route to other destinations. Of the visitors staying the day or longer, approximately half the number of visitors are Alberta residents. Most of the rest are from British Columbia and United States with a small but increasing number originating from Europe. Consequently, specific target groups include: incidental highway travellers; informed highway travellers; Alberta residents; and British Columbia residents.

The provision of information to park visitor, both inside and outside the park is approached through three means: 1) awareness and pre-trip planning, 2) orientation and information and 3) natural and cultural heritage education, as discussed below.

6.3.1 Awareness and Pre-Trip Planning

Park awareness and pre-trip planning information for the park is available from the Prince George District Office and the Mount Robson Park Headquarters. A park-specific brochure describes park resources, facilities and trails and inhouse literature provides detailed information on specific areas and resources in the park. The brochure is also available at the Northern B.C. Regional Office, BC Parks Headquarters in Victoria and BC Tourism Infocentres. Private sector advertising also contributes to regional awareness and provides pre-trip planning information.

Mount Robson Park is not as well known nationally or internationally as its sister national parks of Jasper and Banff; however, its special features such as the "Monarch of the Rockies" and the Berg Lake Trail have a global reputation. The other backcountry opportunities and the holiday destination aspect of the park are not well-known. Park awareness information will provide visitors with alternatives to the Berg Lake Trail such as Mt. Fitzwilliam, and inform them about other camping opportunities. In addition, information programs will be coordinated with Jasper National Park to provide clear regional information. Mount Robson brochures will continue to be sent to tourism information centres in both British Columbia and Alberta particularly those close to the park, at major points of access and at major population centres.

6.3.2 Orientation and Information

Park orientation and information are provided mainly through the Visitor Centre, onsite signage, and park brochures. Interpretive programs in summer can also supply this type of information and will be expanded.

The Visitor Centre plays a major important role in the dissemination of information. It requires further development to take full advantage of its strategic and unique location. A well-researched and developed program statement will be developed to establish guidelines and criteria for the Centre. Consideration will be given to upgrading the facility to include theatre seating, glassed-in viewing lounge, a large exhibit hall and an outdoor presentation area. Further development of displays, video programs, staff services and interpretive programs would also contribute to the role of the Visitor Centre.

Facilities and signage including information shelters, trail signs, and road-side signs will be consistent and integrated to create a park identity. Interpretive and informational signage will be located in the Intensive Recreation Zone at campgrounds, trailheads, and various viewpoints including the Mt. Robson Viewpoint and Overlander Falls. In addition, interpretive signing will be considered for day-use trails such as the Kinney Lake, Fraser River, Portal Lake and Labrador Tea Trails. A self-guiding interpretive trail at Moose Marsh will be developed with minimal environmental impact.

In the Wilderness Recreation and Wilderness Conservation Zones, information and safety signs will be used sparingly.

6.3.3 Natural and Cultural Heritage Education

Mount Robson, in conjunction with the other protected areas in the Rocky Mountains, represents a tremendous wilderness area protecting the region's ecological diversity. The international significance of this area has been recognized through UNESCO's World Heritage Site designation.

The park has a role to play in heritage education and interpretation, informing visitors of the natural and cultural resources of both the park and the province. Through this, support and understanding for the mandate of BC Parks and management of the park can be cultivated. In addition, visitors are encouraged to develop a sense of stewardship for the park and the features it protects.

To achieve this educational role, the following will be addressed:

- interpretation assessment for the park;
- interpretation and information plan;
- display plan for the Visitor Centre to present natural and cultural features and recreation opportunities of Mount Robson, and introduce the World Heritage Site concept;
- extensive program of visitor contact and communication involving both personal services and self-explanatory material such as visitor programs, school programs, self-guided trails, special events, brochures and displays;
- coordination of education and information programs with Jasper National Park.

Messages in the education program will utilize themes that are unique to Mount Robson Park and will emphasize its role in both conservation and recreation. Major themes will focus on:

i) Natural Heritage: regional landscapes (Northern Continental Ranges), active glaciation, plate tectonics, climate, zonation of alpine areas and the ecological diversity of the Canadian Rocky Mountains World Heritage Site.

ii) Cultural Heritage: the archaeological evidence, role in native culture, early explorers and tourists, railway history, the mountaineering exploits, Japanese work camps and the role of the Yellowhead Pass area as a travel route.

ii) Recreation: opportunities available in the park, outdoor safety, wilderness and conservation ethics, firewood conservation, bear safety, low impact park use, mountain bike etiquette and wildlife on the highway.

Themes that are located in remote and sensitive areas will be described by off site media. In the Wilderness Conservation and Wilderness Recreation Zones, interpretation will be through brochures and off-site signage rather than onsite.

6.4 Marketing and Promotion

The image of Mount Robson results from its outstanding unique experiences which are based on its special features, its wilderness character and the accessibility of a backcountry experience. The Visitor Centre could play even a larger role to strengthen this image. Schools programs and special events such as Parks Day and Trails Day could increase the awareness of and garner support for the park and its role.

Promotion will be directed at the park's significance in conservation and at the holiday destination use of the park. Given the popularity of the Berg Lake Trail, it will not be promoted. Efforts will be made to inform potential visitors to Berg Lake of high levels of use on summer weekends and probability of hearing helicopters flying around Mt. Robson. Once a means of controlling numbers has been established through a management plan, visitors will be informed of the possibilities of having to delay their hike up the trail. Shoulder season and mid-week visits will be encouraged.

BC Parks will continue to use the services of the tourism regions, North by Northwest and Highcountry, to inform the travelling public of the destination and day-use opportunities in the park. We will also continue to support international promotion of the park. In recognizing that the majority of visitors are from Alberta, promotion and marketing activities will be directed at the Alberta market. BC Tourism will be encouraged to continue the services it provides in the Visitor Centre.

6.5 Management Services

The park is administered by the Mount Robson Zone of the Prince George District and has its headquarters at the Mount Robson Visitor Centre. Staff ensures that various management responsibilities are carried out according to the guidelines of this Master Plan and the established policy and procedures of the Ministry. Specifically, staff perform the following tasks:

- Regulate public use to ensure safe and proper use of the park and its facilities.
- Maintain trails, cabins and other facilities.
- Conduct work necessary to prevent user impacts and to protect vegetation, heritage, wildlife and wilderness values.
- Monitor utility activities within the Travel Corridor to limit impact on park environment.
- Prepare Annual Management Plans that address implementation of approved development and management actions presented in this Master Plan.
- Inspect permits covering all commercial recreational uses within the park.
- Monitor visitor use to ensure protection of resources.
- Minimize impact of facilities and management activities such as helicopter flights.
- Enforce Park Act Regulations.
- Collect data on resources.

A seasonal backcountry ranger program is in place for the high use areas, such as the Berg Lake Trail.

6.6 Outdoor Recreation Opportunities

Due to its outstanding natural resources, Mount Robson Park has a long history of recreation use and continues to be a popular destination. However, recreation use must occur at a level that is not detrimental to the resources. The following section sets objectives for the provision of acceptable recreation opportunities and describes actions to be undertaken to provide these activities and protect the environment.

6.6.1 Angling

Recreational angling in Mount Robson Park and the Valemount area is limited due to the low productivity of the cold and silty lakes and streams. To provide more opportunities, Portal and Witney Lakes have been enhanced through stocking.

Objective:

To provide angling opportunities for park visitors without detriment to native fish populations.

Actions:

- Direct angling in Portal and Witney Lakes through information and better access.
- Permit stocking, fish enhancement and angling facilities in the Intensive Recreation Zone only.
- Investigate opportunities for natural stock enhancement in Moose and Yellowhead Lakes.
- Leave all other waters in natural state to preserve aquatic biological system.

6.6.2 Backcountry Hiking

Mount Robson Park offers a variety of hiking, from short day hikes to backcountry trips to wilderness excursions that can lead into Alberta. Most of the backcountry use occurs on the Berg Lake Trail which may be over-used and not meeting the backcountry expectations of users.

Objective:

To develop a range of hiking opportunities within the Intensive Recreation, Natural Environment and Wilderness Recreation Zones which minimizes the impact on the environment and conflicts between users.

Actions:

- Develop a management plan for the Berg Lake Trail to include: assessment of carrying capacity, means of controlling numbers, specific trail and facility planning and development; day hike opportunities from Berg Lake; horse use on the trail; reservation system for the Robson Pass horse camp; fuel and firewood use.
- Develop primitive backcountry and support facilities on Moose River Route as needed and as appropriate for the Moose River Wilderness Recreation Zone.
- Continue to develop primitive backcountry facilities on the upper end of the Mt. Fitzwilliam Trail as appropriate for the wilderness recreation zoning.
- Pursue opportunities with Jasper National Park in the Yellowhead Mountain/Rink Lakes area.
- Investigate opportunities to provide access to Alpland and Emerald Ridge areas in the Alpland Wilderness Recreation Zone.

6.6.3 Boating

Boating opportunities include motor-boating, rafting, kayaking and canoeing. Limited motor-boating takes place on Moose Lake and on the east section of Yellowhead Lake. Rafting and kayaking occur on the Class IV - V waters of the Fraser River below Moose Lake and commercial rafting takes place below Hargreaves Road. Canoeing is a suitable activity in the protected waters of Yellowhead Lake and Moose Marsh and on the Upper Fraser from Yellowhead to Moose Lake.

Objective:

To provide boating activities consistent with the natural setting of the park.

Actions:

- Allow boating activities in the Travel Corridor Intensive Use Zone.
- Encourage canoeing and kayaking on Moose and Yellowhead Lakes.
- Control float plane landings; allow landings under permit to west side of Moose Lake.
- Continue to permit commercial rafting use on the Fraser River below Hargreaves Road.
- Permit commercial canoeing and kayaking on Moose and Yellowhead Lakes.

- Permit motor-boating to Moose Lake and the east section of Yellowhead Lake. Consider restrictions on horsepower and type of motor to protect wildlife and for public safety.

- Assess opportunities for floating, kayaking and canoeing upstream from Moose Marsh.

6.6.4 Frontcountry Camping

Mount Robson Park has three campgrounds which meet current needs. Often Lucerne campground receives more visitors than it can accommodate on weekends and holidays which may be due to its strategic location on the east side of the park and the lakeside setting. Private campgrounds to the west of the park are available to offset peak demands.

Objectives:

To provide a camping destination.

Actions:

- Develop an information strategy to shift some use from Lucerne to Robson Meadows campground. Promotion and referrals from Jasper would be part of this strategy.

- Monitor campground use through satisfaction surveys, comments and user trends to determine future development.

- Allow frontcountry camping in the Travel Corridor Intensive Recreation Zone only.

- Develop campsites for tents and for cyclists.

- Develop and inform campers of day-use activities and visitor services available.

- Coordinate and cooperate with private campgrounds.

6.6.5 Horse Use

Historically, horses have been an important means of travel through Mount Robson Provincial Park. However, conflicts with other users are occurring. In addition, care must be taken to not over use areas or damage the park's sensitive natural areas. Currently, horse use is permitted only up the Moose River Valley with limited commercial use on the Berg Lake Trail.

Objective:

To provide opportunities for horse use that have minimal impact on the environment or conflict with other users.

Actions:

- Keep horse use on the Berg Lake Trail to the existing permittees. Assess the ability of the trail to support horse use as part of the management plan. Set number of horse days and trail rest days to allow for both pedestrian and horse traffic and to protect the integrity of the trail. Upgrade and separate trail as necessary to limit impact in wet areas.

- Direct riders without permits (private parties and other commercial users) to Moose River Route; develop primitive facilities as necessary to protect environment and in cooperation with local outfitters and the B.C. Horse Council.

- Regulate horse use as necessary to protect the environment and limit conflicts with other users, using criteria such as party size, camp facilities, timing. Trails may be closed during certain conditions (extended periods of rain, soft conditions after a late thaw) to prevent trail damage.

- Establish a reservation system for public use of horse camp in the Robson Pass. Private parties will access the camp through Jasper National Park.

- Allow only private horse use in other areas except the Resplendent Valley Wilderness Conservation Zone, which will be closed to all horses.

6.6.6 Mountaineering

Mt. Robson and the Ramparts offer spectacular climbing opportunities. Mt. Robson is recognized as a classic climb among the mountaineering fraternity and attracts climbers world-wide.

Objective:

To continue to provide opportunities for challenging mountaineering.

Actions:

- Manage climbing on Mt. Robson in accordance with the wilderness recreation zoning.

- Develop a strategy to permit private and commercial climbing while promoting safety.

6.6.7 Mountain Biking

Mountain biking has become a popular outdoor recreation activity. However, the trails in the park were built for pedestrians and horses and for the most part, are too steep, narrow or wet for bikes.

Objective:

To provide opportunities for mountain biking that have minimal impact on the environment or conflict with other users.

Actions:

- Designate the following as mountain bike routes: the Mt. Fitzwilliam Trail to the Rockingham Creek campsite; and the Berg Lake Trail to the Kinney Gravel Flats. Close all other trails to mountain bike use.
- Develop mountain bike routes using existing roads and rights of ways such as the Trans Mountain Pipeline right of way, historic roads and abandoned railway rights of way.
- Develop an education program in conjunction with the B.C. Bicycling Association and local groups based on signage and provide information at the Visitor Centre to highlight trail etiquette.
- Establish a monitoring program and adjust use to reflect results, such as trail improvement, further restrictions on bike use.

6.6.8 Recreational Guiding

Guided services include hiking, camping, canoeing, horse trips, river rafting, and helicopter trips. To maintain the integrity of the park and provide opportunities for both local operators and visitors, there must be limits on commercial guiding activities. The level of guiding in the different zones will depend upon the type of activity, the duration, timing, size of group and the area in which this activity occurs.

Objective:

To continue to allow recreational guiding where compatible with social and environmental carrying capacity.

Actions:

- Consider the social and environmental carrying capacity of the Wilderness Conservation and Wilderness Recreation Zones. Issue permits according to type, duration and frequency of activity, size of group, and sensitivity of area.

- Allow only the two commercial horse permits in the Berg Lake Natural Environment Zone and establish permit conditions according to the Berg Lake Trail management plan.

- Issue exclusive or limited permits through a competitive process.

- Require all commercial permit holders to develop a five year management plan that is compatible with this Master Plan to be updated and approved annually for their operations in the park.

- Permit commercial canoeing and kayaking on Moose and Yellowhead Lakes.

- Continue to permit commercial rafting use on the Fraser River below Hargreaves Road.

- Work with recreational guides on west boundary to provide access to park resources for activities suitable for the Wilderness Recreation and Wilderness Conservation Zones.

6.6.9 Resource Appreciation

Mount Robson Park's outstanding natural and historical resources have tremendous appreciation, interpretation and education potential. Activities, such as self-guided hikes and interpretive programs, are popular and can build an appreciation for historical and natural features of the park. In addition, they complement the tourism industry of the region and further enhance visitor opportunities, which are important to the elderly, non-hiking and special needs visitors. Lastly, these activities promote stewardship and support for the park and its resources. The Visitor Centre can play a major role in providing information on these activities and directing use.

Objectives:

To encourage greater visitor appreciation of the park's natural and cultural heritage.

To expand the opportunities for day-use while minimizing environmental impact.

Actions:

- Develop interpretive programs and information materials explaining the park's natural and cultural resources.

- Develop and implement interpretive strategies for Kinney Lake, Berg Lake, Overlander and Rearguard Falls.

- Reassess wildlife viewing plan for Moose Lake and develop viewing opportunities.

- Develop historic interpretive opportunities in the park, specifically in east end of park including Summit City and the Lucerne Townsite.
- Develop a nature study trail around the kettle lakes.
- Upgrade day-use trails, such as the Portal Lake, Labrador Tea and Fraser River Nature Trails.
- Investigate opportunities for the provision of day-use activities in west end of park, within the intent of the zoning.
- Complete the Viewpoint Trail to Campion Mountain.
- Complete an environmental review before undertaking any development.

6.6.10 Sightseeing

The Yellowhead Highway traverses the park, exposing the traveller to some outstanding features such as the magnificent mountain scenery, Moose Lake, Overlander Falls, Rearguard Falls, and the viewpoint of Mt. Robson. In addition, the park has a rich cultural heritage that is readily accessible from the highway. With 800,000 vehicles and 35,000 bus passengers passing through the park each year, sightseeing represents a significant portion of the visitor use.

Objective:

To provide a pleasant nature viewing experience while travelling through the park.

Actions:

- Continue to provide a variety of road-side viewpoints as interpretive stops of interest, focusing on the park's resources and conservation mandate.
- Provide information both inside and outside of park on opportunities for viewing.
- Continue to provide information and interpretive programs on the park and the province to the travelling public at the Visitor Centre.
- Coordinate sightseeing opportunities and interpretive programs with Jasper National Park.

6.6.11 Winter Recreation

Winter activities represents a small segment of recreational use in Mount Robson. With the rugged terrain and high avalanche hazards, opportunities are limited to cross-country skiing, backcountry skiing, heli-skiing and snowshoeing. Private cabins along the west side of the park serve the backcountry skiers.

An impact assessment has been completed for heli-skiing; the Mount Longstaff area may be able to support this activity without impacts to other user groups and wildlife. BC Parks allowed heli-skiing on a trial basis for a three-month period in the 1990-91 winter season to assess conflicts with wildlife and other users and to test the economic viability.

Objective:

To encourage winter recreation activities.

Actions:

- Provide information about opportunities and hazards for skiing and snowshoeing in the following areas: Kinney Lake, Swiftcurrent Creek and Alpland/Emerald Ridges.
- Keep park closed to snowmobiling.
- Complete an evaluation of the trial heli-skiing operation in the Mount Longstaff area, taking into account environmental impacts, user conflicts and economic viability.
- Investigate opportunities to use utility rights of way for cross-country skiing.
- Permit commercial guided winter use such as backcountry skiing in low hazard areas.
- Recognize the private provision of huts on the west boundary of the park and cooperate with them to facilitate recreation use in the park.

7. PLAN IMPLEMENTATION

Phase One

Resource Management

- Study proposed boundary adjustments.
- Liaise with Ministry of Forests and industry regarding forest access roads and visual aesthetics outside park.
- Produce a forest management strategy.
- Develop Travel Corridor wildlife management plan.
- Obtain park designation for Rearguard Falls.
- Prepare a spill contingency plan.
- Develop a fire management plan.
- Prepare a pest infestation control strategy.
- Develop a Travel Corridor vegetation management plan.

Visitor Services

- Develop management plan for the Berg Lake Trail.
- Undertake an interpretation assessment.
- Develop an interpretation and information strategy.
- Develop wildlife viewing opportunities at Moose Marsh.
- Upgrade day-use trails including Portal Lake, Labrador Tea, Fraser River Nature Trails.
- Develop a campground information strategy.
- Investigate stock enhancement opportunities for Moose and Yellowhead Lakes.
- Evaluate trial heli-ski operation.
- Develop heritage education opportunities particularly in the east end of the park.
- Develop a climbing strategy.
- Investigate day-use opportunities in west end of the park.

Phase Two

Resource Management

- Develop a wildlife management strategy.
- Contact natives regarding cultural significance of Mt. Robson.
- Phase out cabins.
- Buy out trapline.
- Initiate discussions with Jasper National Park and Ministry of Environment to develop common wildlife management objectives and identify opportunities for carnivore conservation.

Visitor Services

- Monitor horse use and impact on Moose River Route.
- Monitor mountain bike use.
- Prepare a plan for the Visitor Centre.
- Develop a nature study trail around the kettle ponds.
- Assess the archaeological resources for education, scientific and protection purposes.
- Develop a bike trail on utility rights of way.
- Develop cross-country ski route on a utility right of way.

Mount Robson Provincial Park

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Appendix A
BC Parks System Goals

BC Parks

BC PARKS SYSTEM GOALS

In the Park Act, BC Parks must:

- conserve significant and representative natural and cultural resources, and
- provide a wide variety of outdoor recreation opportunities.

Conservation

With the conservation mandate, BC Parks has two goals:

Goal 1 Protection of Representative Landscapes - To conserve British Columbia's natural diversity by protecting viable, representative examples of our different landscapes.

Goal 2 Protection of Special Features - To protect British Columbia's key natural and cultural features, including outstanding examples of our wildlife, old growth forests, waterfalls and cultural artifacts.

Recreation

Within the recreation mandate, BC Parks has four goals:

Goal 1 Tourism Travel Routes - To provide park attractions and services which enhance tourism travel routes.

Goal 2 Outdoor Recreation Holiday Destinations - To provide park attractions which serve as or improve key destinations for outdoor recreation holidays.

Goal 3 Backcountry - To provide outstanding backcountry recreation opportunities throughout the province. Some sites may feature adventure tourism, while in other areas the wilderness would remain untouched.

Goal 4 Local Recreation - To ensure access to local outdoor recreation opportunities for all residents of this province.

Mount Robson Provincial Park

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Appendix B
BC Parks Zoning

ZONING IN BC PARKS

	Intensive Recreation	Natural Environment
OBJECTIVE	To provide for a variety of readily accessible, facility-oriented outdoor recreation opportunities.	To protect scenic values and to provide for backcountry recreation opportunities in a largely undisturbed natural environment.
USE LEVEL	Relatively high density and long duration types of use.	Relatively low use but higher levels in association with nodes of activity or access.
MEANS OF ACCESS	All-weather public roads or other types of access where use levels are high (see "Impacts" below).	Mechanized (power-boats, snowmobiles, all terrain vehicles), non-mechanized (foot, horse, canoe, bicycle). Aircraft and motorboat access to drop-off and pickup points will be permitted.
LOCATION	Continuous with all-weather roads and covering immediate areas, modified landscapes or other high-use areas.	Removed from all-weather roads but easily accessible on a day-use basis. Accessible for mechanized means such as boat or plane.
SIZE OF ZONE	Small; usually less than 2,000 ha.	Can range from small to large.
BOUNDARY DEFINITION	Includes areas of high facility development in concentrated areas.	Boundaries should consider limits of activity/facility areas relative to ecosystem characteristics and features.
RECREATION OPPORTUNITIES	Vehicle camping, picnicking, beach activities, power-boating, canoeing, kayaking, strolling, historic and natural appreciation, fishing, snowplay, downhill and cross-country skiing, snowshoeing, specialized activities.	Walk-in/boat-in camping, power-boating, hunting, canoeing, kayaking, backpacking, historic and nature appreciation, fishing, cross-country skiing, snowmobiling, river rafting, horseback riding, heli-skiing, heli-hiking, and specialized activities.

Special Feature	Wilderness Recreation	Wilderness Conservation
To protect and present significant natural or cultural resources, features or processes because of their special character, facility and heritage values.	To protect a remote, undisturbed natural landscape and to provide backcountry recreation opportunities dependent on a pristine environment where air access may be permitted to designed sites.	To protect a remote, undisturbed natural landscape and to provide unassessed backcountry recreation opportunities dependent on a pristine environment where no motorized activities will be allowed.
Generally low.	Very low use, to provide solitary experiences and a wilderness atmosphere. Use may be controlled to protect the environment.	Very low use, to provide solitary experiences and a wilderness atmosphere. Use may be controlled to protect the environment.
Various; may require special access permit.	Non-mechanized; except may permit low frequency air access to designated sites; foot, canoe (horses may be permitted).	Non-mechanized (no air access); foot, canoe (horses may be permitted).
Determined by location of special resources; may be surrounded by or next to any of the other zones.	Remote; generally not visited on a day-use basis.	Remote; not easily visited on a day-use basis.
Small; usually less to 2000 hectares.	Large; greater than 5,000 ha.	Large; greater than 5,000 ha.
Area required by biophysical characteristics or the natural and extent of cultural resources (adequate to afford protection).	Defined by ecosystem limits and geographic features. Boundaries will encompass areas of visitor interest for specific activities supported by air access. Will be designated under the Park Act.	Defined by ecosystem limits and geographic features. Will be designated under the Park Act.
Sight-seeing, historic and nature appreciation. May be subject to temporary closures or permanently restricted access.	Backpacking, canoeing, kayaking, river rafting, nature and historic appreciation, hunting, fishing, cross-country skiing, snowshoeing, horseback riding, specialized activities (eg. caving, climbing).	Backpacking, canoeing, kayaking, river rafting, nature and historic appreciation, fishing, cross-country skiing, snowshoeing, horseback riding, specialized activities (eg. caving, climbing).

	Intensive Recreation	Natural Environment
FACILITIES	May be intensely developed for user convenience. Campgrounds, landscaped picnic/play areas, trail, accommodation or interpretive buildings, boat launches; administrative buildings, service campgrounds, gravel pits, disposal sites, wood lots, parking lots, etc.	Moderately developed to user convenience. Trails, walk-in/boat-in campsites, shelters; accommodation buildings may be permitted; facilities for motorized access eg. docks, land strips, fuel storage, etc. Lodge developments in facilities subzone.
IMPACTS ON NATURAL ENVIRONMENT	Includes natural resource features and phenomena in a primarily natural state but where human presence may be readily visible both through the existence of recreation facilities and of people using the zone. Includes areas of high facility development with significant impact on concentrated areas.	Areas where human presence on the land is not normally visible, facilities development limited to relatively small areas. Facilities are visually compatible with natural setting.
MANAGEMENT GUIDELINES	Oriented toward maintaining a high quality recreation experience. Intensive management of resource and/or control of visitor activities. Operational facilities designed for efficient operation while remaining unobtrusive to the park visitor.	Oriented to maintaining a natural environment and to providing a high quality recreation experience. Visitor access may be restricted to preserve the recreation experience to limit impact on the areas. Separation of less compatible recreational activities and transportation Designation of transportation may be necessary to avoid potential conflicts (eg. horse trails, cycle paths, hiking trails).
EXAMPLES OF ZONING	Campground in Rathtrevor Bach Park; Gibson Pass ski areas in EC Manning Park.	Core area in Cathedral Provincial Park; North beach in Naikoon Park.

Special Feature	Wilderness Recreation	Wilderness Conservation
Interpretive facilities only, resources are to be protected.	Minimal facility development. Limited development for user conveniences and safety, and protection of the environment eg. trails, primitive campsites, etc. Some basic facilities at access nodes, eg. dock, primitive shelter, etc.	None.
None; resources to be maintained unimpaired.	Natural area generally free of evidence of modern human beings. Evidence of human presence is confined to specific facility sites. Facilities are visually compatible with natural setting.	Natural area generally free of evidence of modern human beings.
High level of management protection with ongoing monitoring. Oriented to maintaining resources, and, where appropriate, a high quality of recreational and interpretive experience. Action or passive management depending on size, location, and nature of the resource. Visitor access may be restricted to preserve the recreation experience and to limit impact on the area.	Oriented to protecting a pristine environment. Management actions are minimal and not evident. Managed to ensure low visitor use levels. Visitor access may be restricted to protect the natural environment and visitor experience.	Oriented to protecting a pristine environment. Management actions are minimal and not evident. Managed to ensure low visitor use levels. Visitor access may be restricted to protect the natural environment and visitor experience.
Tidepools in Botanical Beach Park; Sunshine Meadow in Mount Assiniboine Park.	Quanchus Mountains Wilderness in Tweedsmuir Park; Wilderness Zone in Spatsizi Park.	Central Valhallas Wilderness in Valhalla Provincial Park; Garibaldi Park Nature Conservancy area.

Mount Robson Provincial Park

MASTER PLAN

DRAFT

Appendix C
Summary of Public Comments from Open House Questionnaire

BC Parks

PUBLIC COMMENTS FROM OPEN HOUSE QUESTIONNAIRE

INTRODUCTION

BC Parks received 154 responses to the Mount Robson Provincial Park Questionnaire. The reader should be aware that the information below is not a statistical representation of the citizens of B.C. but rather a summary of the respondents' opinions. The information is organized according to the headings of the original questionnaire.

GENERAL

Overwhelmingly, participants responded that what makes Mount Robson Park special is its spectacular beauty and outstanding wilderness. Many feel a close personal relationship with the park, in that they live close by, visit frequently, or had their first backcountry trip here. Accessibility to the backcountry and minimal commercialization also contributed to the quality of the park.

" For its beauty, majesty and a simple escape from civilization."

The distinguishing features in the park are considered to be Mount Robson itself and the Berg Lake Trail. Others cited the headwaters of the Fraser River, the scenery, glaciers, the access to backcountry, minimal development and the wildlife.

"...much of my life has revolved around living with the mountain. The park, mountain and my psyche are all tangled up."

In terms of guiding the park's direction, the predominant response was to maintain the wilderness and natural environment. To achieve this, some respondents called for limited mechanized access, while others requested access for all. A number of people would like to see more opportunities for non-commercialized recreation; others do not want to see any more development of any type.

PARK BOUNDARY

Over two-thirds of respondents supported adjusting the park boundary to better protect and represent natural features; nearly all opposed deletions. Areas most often suggested are along the northwest boundary and include the Swiftcurrent Creek, Longstaff-Goslin-Chamberlain area, Highway 16 Corridor including Rearguard Falls, and the Holmes River-Small River area. The Ptarmigan Creek Headwaters were also proposed.

ROLE OF THE PARK

Many responded that BC Parks already does an adequate job of serving the travelling public with the Viewpoint and Visitor Centre. Suggestions to improve service included more natural and historic interpretation and increased day use activities, specifically in the east side of the park.

In terms of managing and protecting the wilderness areas, the respondents emphasized conservation with limited development and mechanized access. In addition, people replied that BC Parks should manage as much area as possible for wilderness and conservation, including the Moose River, Upper Fraser, Resplendent Valley, and alpine areas.

FOREST MANAGEMENT

"Let's face it - you cannot have your cake and eat it too. Old growth forests reduce the ungulate populations - which is more important?"

Nearly three quarters did not agree that forests in the park should evolve naturally with no fire suppression. Respondents were split on whether to allow only natural fires to burn or to undertake prescribed burning to enhance wildlife. Over half the people thought it was a good idea to allow some areas to burn (such as the backcountry) and to control fire in others (in the corridor) but research on fire management is needed. Lastly, almost two thirds supported removing insect infested trees.

FISH MANAGEMENT

There was a mixed reaction to enhancing the fish populations in the park, although over half supported the idea, particularly accessible lakes that are capable of supporting a fish population and that already have fish introduced. A monitoring program was requested to check the fishing pressure and the health of the stocks.

HERITAGE FEATURES

Numerous suggestions came in regarding the preservation and presentation of the history of the park. The more common ones include more displays in the Information Centre, more interpretative stops, educational videos, self-guided tours, interpretative trails, and displays at Lucerne.

WILDLIFE MANAGEMENT

"The natural landscape should be left as intact as possible. Humans bungle too many things when they become involved."

The predominant opinion was that natural processes should dominate and only if populations are in danger should man intervene. Research on wildlife populations was strongly recommended to determine their numbers and habitat requirements. Control of poaching was also a concern.

"Keep an accurate inventory - assist only in emergencies."

In terms of protecting the wildlife along the corridor, many suggested warning signs, lower speed limits, research to determine migrations routes, more patrols to limit poaching, salt licks and habitat enhancement away from the corridor.

"...but only <u>after</u> studies have indicated what should be done."

More than half support limiting but not prohibiting access into backcountry to avoid conflicts with wildlife. The exception was for critical or highly sensitive areas where access should probably be prohibited. A common suggestion was to educate backcountry hikers on the danger of conflicts with wildlife in the area.

There was a mixed reaction to managing habitat for wildlife, with just more than half agreeing. Most people would like to see only natural processes operating in the park. Others argue that since man has already interrupted the natural cycle, management is needed. Most agree that if action is taken, it should be minimal. There's a lack of trust in man's ability to manipulate the environment. Although many people suggested limiting hunting, this activity has already been phased out of the park in 1987.

MOUNTAIN BIKING

Two thirds people feel that mountain bikes should be allowed in the park but limited to roadways or the Berg Lake Trail as far as Kinney Flats. Some respondents suggested specially built trails for mountain bikes to reduce conflicts with other users, and proposed the use of rights of way and old roads in the park. Others recommended temporary closures during peak hiking season and times of wet trail conditions.

HORSE RIDING

"...horses are part of the heritage of the park."

Three quarters agreed that horses are appropriate in Mount Robson, particularly given the history of horse use in the park. However, this use should be controlled and regulated and kept at the current level so as to limit impact to the environment and other users. Suggested areas include the Moose, Upper Fraser, Swiftcurrent Rivers and the Selwyn Range.

HELICOPTER ACCESS

Almost three quarters agreed that there is a role for helicopters in the park, but half of these indicated that it should be limited to rescues and park operation. In addition, almost all agreed that helicopter drop offs in the backcountry should be restricted and carefully controlled to preserve the wilderness atmosphere and to protect wildlife populations and sensitive areas.

"No person too old, young, crippled or handicapped should be restricted from seeing Mount Robson Park."

Helicopter sight-seeing in the park received mixed results, with more than half disagreeing with this activity. However, some indicated that this may be an acceptable means for the disabled and elderly to see the park.

"The park should be place of quiet where a person can get away from the noise of our motorized world."

Approximately two thirds do not support heli-dependent activities such as heli-hiking, heli-skiing and heli-biking. Most commented that such activities should be restricted to specific areas to limit impact on the natural environment and minimize conflicts with other users.

Over half the people do not support heli-skiing in the Mount Longstaff area, citing that heli-skiing opportunities outside the park are more than adequate. Others agreed to heli-skiing in this area if there are no impacts on wintering wildlife.

HIKING AND CAMPING

Half the respondents think BC Parks should develop more trails for day use and short backcountry trips. Some suggested developing more backcountry trails to take the pressure off of Berg Lake while others argued for maintaining the rest of the backcountry as pure wilderness.

"Develop sites if necessary only on corridor area. Should not compete with present and future facilities in McBride, Tete Jaune and Valemount."

The reaction to the development of more camping was mixed. Some suggested that type of development be left to the private sector outside the park, while others suggested more car camping at Lucerne, if demand warrants it. More backcountry sites were suggested in conjunction with the building of more backcountry trails.

Over half agreed that a hut to hut system in the park would be a good idea particularly to increase winter use. Others did not support this idea as such a system would intrude on the wilderness experience; some indicated this type of recreation opportunity was best left to the private sector to develop outside the park.

WINTER RECREATION

The winter recreation activities that were emphasized included the non-mechanized forms such as backcountry and cross country skiing, snowshoeing and ice fishing. Heli-skiing was also suggested. Although snowmobiling was proposed, this activity is not permitted in Mount Robson.

COMMERCIAL RECREATION

"I would not like Robson Park to get any more commercial than it is. This is one point that distinguishes Robson Park from others."

A good number of people replied that either no commercial activities or only the present level should be allowed in the park. Others focused on the low impact non-consumptive uses that have little environmental impact such guided horse riding and guided hiking trips. Most agreed that no development, or very minimal, should occur in the park. Development, including commercial resorts, is best left to the local communities.

CONCLUDING REMARKS

Respondents had many positive comments on the public involvement process and look forward to future participation. Most took the opportunity to express their concern on the controversial issues such as helicopter access and boundary options. Many concluded that conservation and preservation were the most important factors to consider in developing a Master Plan for Mount Robson Provincial Park.